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A PROGRAM TO SUPPORT LITERACY EDUCATION: THE READING COACH IN THE HOME DISTRICT

BACKGROUND:

A major factor in the design of the Early Literacy Initiative is that most of the teachers serving as reading coaches are on leave from their home districts. Following one year of training and service as reading coaches, the individual may return to his/her home district. The design of the program, therefore, allows the Office of Early Literacy to achieve several goals:

1. Over a four-year period, a large number of highly trained literacy content specialists with considerable skill in peer coaching would be added to the state's pool of education professionals.
2. By drawing coaches from all types of districts throughout the state, not just schools which were eligible for the services of a reading coach, the department is able to extend the reach of the literacy program to more districts than would otherwise be possible.
3. Having the coaches work in different schools and districts not only broadens their horizons, but also allows them to develop as professionals in ways that might be inhibited in their home schools.

RETURNING COACHES:

The office of Early Literacy plans to maintain an ongoing professional relationship with those teachers who have spent one year working as coaches. In the summer following their year with the Department of Education, the teacher will work with the new coaches entering the program. Then, throughout the school year, as professional development opportunities arise, the former coach will be invited to be involved whenever appropriate. Finally, the department will facilitate the coaches' ongoing efforts to maintain a collaborative, supportive working relationship with other literacy professionals.

While the coaches came to the department with a great fund of information and abilities, each individual's knowledge and skills have been complemented and deepened by this program. They have had the opportunity to build skills in peer coaching, as well as in offering professional staff development through talks, lectures, workshops, and so forth. They are

prepared to present demonstration lessons, conduct professional study groups and support the curriculum development process. They have deep knowledge of the theory and practice of literacy education and have the skills to share that knowledge with other professionals. This is a tremendous resource that is now available to the local district.

To encourage the home district to take maximum advantage of this resource, the Department of Education will continue to provide financial support, under certain conditions, for the trained coaches as they return to their home districts. **However, districts that are recipients of Reading First grants are not eligible for this financial support.** The conditions are as follows:

1. The coach must be permitted to continue to participate fully in the professional development and support activities provided for all reading coaches by the Department of Education. Thereby, the coach will be an integral part of the reading coach program for a second year while they are also a full-time member of the district staff.
2. For at least the first full year after the teacher returns to the district, his/her full-time assignment must be as a reading/literacy coach for K-3 teachers in identified buildings or for part or all of the district, working within the scope of a job description that is essentially the same as that which is used by the Office of Early Literacy. The concentration of the coach's assignment is to be in areas of greatest need within grades K-3, including general education, special education, and ESL/bilingual programs.
3. The returning coach must express a willingness to serve in the capacity described.
4. District eligibility will be determined by one or more of the following characteristics:
 - a. If the district has one or more buildings eligible for the services of a coach, the department will continue to pay the full salary and benefits of the returning teacher. OR
 - b. If the district does not have a building eligible for reading coach services, but can demonstrate a need for a reading coach in one of the ways listed below, the department will pay one-half the salary and benefits of the returning coach.
 - i. Considering the district as a whole, rather than the concentration of students in a single building, there is a significant number of low-performing students and/or English language learners and special education students, and the district will assign the coach to work with teachers of those students.
OR
 - ii. Considering the district as a whole, a significant number of students in grades (K-4) may be misidentified for special education due to low achievement in reading, and the district is willing to participate in a project aimed at reducing the number of students identified for special education.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting the Office of Early Literacy at (609)777-2140 for additional information.